NEFIRS NEWS

ANOTHER YEAR OVER

Another year has come to an end and hopefully there are still a lot of departments who are working on getting their 2005 data submitted. So far I've received data from 195 departments compared to 268 in 2003 and 244 in 2004. Since there are almost 500 departments in the State it would be nice if we could increase reporting above the 50% level.

State Statute requires fire departments to report all fires in their jurisdiction to the State Fire Marshal's Office. Also, if your department has received a FEMA grant you are required to report for one year as a condition of receiving the grant. This is verified so if you haven't submitted any reports yet it is not too late to do so.

I would like to have all 2005 reports by February 28, 2006 if possible. I know there are some departments that won't be able to meet this cutoff. Just let me know approximately when you think you can get the reports in. USFA has a cut off date of June 30, 2006 so I must have all 2005 reports by that date.

I've seen an improvement in the data submitted but there are still a few areas that seem to be troublesome. Don't forget to read "Reporting Reminders" for clarification and tips on completing reports. Also be sure to pass this along to others who may be completing the reports in your department.

Keep up the good work and with your encouragement to non-reporting fire departments, maybe we can reach 75% reporting again – something we haven't achieved since 1991!

NEW SOFTWARE VERSION AND DOCUMENTATION

On January 2, USFA released a new version of the Federal Data Entry Tool, 5.4.0. If registered users have not already done so, please go to www.nfirs.fema.gov , go to the User Section, click on User Login, and then Download Software. If users do not have 5.4.0 on their computer they will not be able to log in to the Data Entry Tool. If you have questions or problems downloading and installing the software, let me know (402-471-9472 or lori.loyd@sfm.ne.gov)

Those departments using vendor software should also have received an upgrade to the vendor's software. Please be sure that you install this upgrade so you remain current with all the system changes. If you have not received an upgrade, please contact the vendor. One reason you may not have received an upgrade is if you have not paid for your maintenance agreement.

There have been significant changes made to the software. If you do not keep your software upgraded you will be out of compliance and your data will not be accepted.

Changes have also been made, or are in process, to the paper forms and manuals. Once these are available I will post them on our website, www.sfm.ne.gov (Forms – NEFIRS or Lists/Publications – NEFIRS) or they can be found at www.nfirs.fema.gov .

PROBLEMS INSTALLING/USING THE FEDERAL DATA ENTRY TOOL

Some departments have had problems installing software recently. Two things you may want to look at if you are having a problem are:

- Are you running antivirus software? If so and you receive an error about iKernel.exe, try disabling the antivirus program before installing the NFIRS software. It's recommended the antivirus program be disabled whenever installing software.
- Still getting the iKernel.exe error and your antivirus software is disabled or you don't have any antivirus software? If your operating system is Windows XP, you must be logged in as the administrator in order to install the software.
- Are you using a DSL connection? If so, you probably have a firewall through your DSL provider. If this is the case and you are running Windows XP, turn off the firewall in XP (Go to Start – Settings – Control Panel – Windows Firewall).

For login issues, the most common error has been entering the full state name in the State login field instead of the two letter abbreviation, NE. Other factors could be:

- your account is inactive because you haven't logged in within the last 60 days,
- you are typing your password incorrectly, or
- you have exceeded your number of login attempts (after 5 times you will be locked out).

Contact Cathy or me to reactivate your account or reset your logins.

Do you think you saved your report only to find out you didn't or you noticed you received an Exception when saving the report? The most common cause for this has been changing the Exposure Number in the first window, Section A – Key Information, from 000 to 001 or another number. Unless you are entering an exposure fire report, this number should be left at 000. The easiest way to enter an exposure fire report is after entering the report for the original fire or after re-opening the original fire report and then clicking on New Exposure on the right hand side. This will bring up a new report and default certain codes that can only be used for exposure fires.

EXPORTING DATA FROM FireRMS SOFTWARE

Departments using the FireRMS software (aka Sunpro, Aether and BioKey): **PLEASE** be sure that you send me the NFIRS Export, **NOT** the FireRMS Export. The latter adds additional data to the file which cannot be imported into the federal database. Many times I think this export is done because the NFIRS Export won't work as there are errors or reports not marked complete which will prevent the NFIRS Export from working.

If I receive a FireRMS Export I will return it to be redone using the NFIRS Export.

CHANGES TO NFIRS 5.0

Since Nebraska is a farm state, the change I'm happiest to see is that there are finally Mobile Property Codes for farm equipment. We have been asking for these to be added since we went to NFIRS 5.0 and now they are here!

Some other changes to the reporting system that occurred January 1 are:

- A report for a confined fire (Incident Type 113-118) cannot be completed if there is a fatality or significant dollar loss. You will need to do a full report – Basic, Fire and Structure Fire Module. The Incident Type would be 111,112, or 120-123.
- An edit was added that will not allow users to enter an Arrival Date with the year being greater than the Alarm Date year unless the date is December 31. This will help with

average response times (see "Reporting Reminders" for more information).
- The Heat Source 80's code series on the Fire Module could not be entered unless the incident exposure number was greater than 000. This caused problems reporting fireplace fires so the restriction was removed.

RELEASED DATA

Users of the Federal Data Entry Tool who try to change an incident report several months after the incident may find that the information in the modules is grayed out and they cannot make any changes. This is because the data has been "released" so that USFA can see and use the data.

If you need to make a change to a report, contact Lori and tell her the incident number(s) or date range and she can unrelease the data so you can make the changes.

All data, including data from department's using vendor software, is stored in a partition on the USFA server called Nebraska. Until data is released only the department entering the data or Cathy and I at the State level can see the data.

USFA has requested that states release their data at least quarterly. All data entered on your reports, with the following exceptions, is released for national use at that time.

- Names
- Date of Birth
- Personnel ID
- Officer in Charge information
- Member Making Report information
- Remarks

NFIRS STATISTICS AND ANALYSIS CLASS

The National Fire Academy will present a two-day class on analyzing NFIRS data and statistics on March 25-26, 2006. The course is designed for experienced NFIRS users who need enhanced fire incident analysis and reporting skills. Students will receive step-by-step instruction in Microsoft Excel, pivot table preparation, querying the NFIRS database, and publishing pivot tables and charts on the Internet.

The class will be held at the Midtown Holiday Inn in Grand Island. A block of rooms has also been reserved. Be sure to mention you are attending this class when making room reservations.

To register go to the Training Division's website, www.nebraskasfmtd.org and click on NFA Direct Deliver Courses. The registration deadline is February 17, 2006. A $10 registration fee must be paid to the State Fire Marshal Training Division.

FIRE ACADEMY TRAINING ON NFIRS AND THE DATA ENTRY TOOL

Our Training Division provides a six hour training class on NFIRS 5.0 and software. Please contact them if you would like to host a training class. A minimum of six people are required for the class to be held.

However, we can also arrange for instructors from the Fire Academy to come and put on a training class. If we would do this, we would probably have one class in Grand Island. Attendees would pay their own expenses.

If you would be interested, let me know. If there is enough interest, we'll see what we can arrange.

USING PLUS ONE CODES WITH THE FEDERAL DATA ENTRY TOOL

Users of the Federal Data Entry Tool may setup Plus One codes so they will appear in the Code Lookup Window. Be sure to think this through carefully though so you don't add unnecessary codes. The steps to create a Plus One code are:

- Log into the System Admin Tool. Click on the **Other …** button on the right side. Then click on the **Codes** button.
- The national level code categories will appear on the left side of the window and the description on the right side. Select the parent code group in which you want to add the Plus One Code, for example 100 Incident Type.
- Click the **Edit** button (not the **New** button). The Codes Lookup Window will appear.
- Click on the plus sign to expand the groups until you find the code (the parent) you want to add a Plus One code under.
- Click on the parent code to highlight, for example 111 Building Fires.
- Click the **New** button. The fields at the bottom will clear and the user Group ID will be entered automatically.
- Enter a **Code Value**, for example 1111.
- Enter a **Parent Code Value**, for example 111.
- Enter a **Decode Value** (description for the code), for example Single-Family Dwelling.
- Leave the **Status** as Active.
- Click **Save**. The plus signs will close. Click the plus signs again to navigate to where you added a code and you will see your Plus One code added.
- If you should decide to delete a Plus One code you have added, login to the System

Admin Tool again. Click the **Other …** button, and then click **Codes**.

- Highlight the code to be deleted, change the status to Inactive, and then click **Save**. The user will be prompted to confirm the delete action, which is not reversible.
- Click **Close** to exit.

REPORTING REMINDERS

NOTE: References to fields and sections are by the names the USFA gave the objects. Some software vendors changed the names and/or locations. Hopefully you will still understand what I am referring to. If not, let me know.

- Incident numbers **must be all numeric** – no letters, dashes, etc. Those using the Federal Data Entry Tool will find that it allows you to enter these, but doing so will cause problems down the road, e.g., you won't be able to retrieve your incidents.
- Do **NOT** use codes that have (Conversion Only) after them. These codes are exclusively for converting NFIRS 4.1 data to the NFIRS 5.0 format. They are not valid codes to be used in completing a 5.0 incident report. Example: Incident Type 110 is a conversion only code. Use Incident Type 111 Structure Fire instead.
- Please be careful when entering your dates and times on the Basic Module. I have recently contacted several departments because of a discrepancy between the Alarm Date and Time and the Arrival Date and Time which caused the response time to be over 24 hours, and in a couple of cases, several months! An edit has been added (see "Changes to NFIRS 5.0") that will prohibit you from entering a different year (which I've seen in the past) unless the Alarm Date is December 31, but it won't catch the ones that are only a day or more off.
- It is also important that the dates and times that are entered on the Apparatus Module fall into the same date and time range that was entered on the Basic Module. Many errors occur because, for example, the Last Unit Cleared time on the Apparatus Module will be after the Last Unit Cleared time that was entered on the Basic Module.
- If you code a report Incident Type 300 "Rescue and EMS incident, other", an EMS Module is not allowed. Please select another Incident Type code that better describes the incident if you need to complete an EMS Module.
- If your department is canceled enroute to an incident and no one from the department arrives at the scene, the correct Incident Type code is 611 and Action Taken Code is 93. If someone did continue on to the scene to investigate, the Incident Type code should be in

the 700 series and Action Taken 86. You cannot use Action Taken code 93 with the 700 series of Incident Type codes.

- We've been telling you that for Incident Types 140-143, 160, and 170-173 you could complete the Wildland Module instead of the Fire Module. This isn't entirely true. If there were zero (0) acres burned you **cannot** complete the Wildland Module. Please complete the Fire Module instead. Also, if it is a stack of hay bales that burned and very little grass surrounding the bales burned, please complete the Fire Module.

FIRE DEPARTMENT RESOURCE INVENTORY REPORT

Enclosed with the newsletter is the Fire Department Resource Inventory Report. Please verify the information and make any necessary changes. The important information is the Fire Department name and mailing address, the fire chief information and the information at the top of the page. The other information is optional.

If there are no changes that need to be made to the information you do not need to return the form.

PAYMENT FORMS

After I get the majority of the reports, I will send out the payment letters to those departments whose chief is not reimbursed more than $50 per year for his/her services. This is in accordance with State Statute 81-531. Hopefully this will be late March.

If you receive a payment form, please be sure to sign **AND** enter your social security number. Payment cannot be made if one or the other of these is missing. Please return the form as soon as possible.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR HELP

Lori: Phone (402) 471-9472
        Email lori.loyd@sfm.ne.gov
        Also send data files to my email address

Cathy: Phone (402) 471-9479
        Email cathy.wann@sfm.ne.gov

FEMA Help Desk:
        Phone: (888) 382-3827
        Email at fema-nfirshhelp@dhs.gov
                The Help Desk is available from 8:30 to 4:30 Eastern time, Monday through Friday.